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*Nicholas Von Hoffman:
'I Don't Mean to Offend'*

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON — "I don't mean to offend anybody," Nicholas Von Hoffman says innocently, but the Washington Post's controversial columnist has succeeded admirably at this task since his first days on the paper in 1966.

Soon after he joined the Post, Mr. Von Hoffman did a series of restaurant reviews with a unique twist: He took people to restaurants where they would be something less than comfortable and then wrote about the experience. A general just back from Vietnam was feasted at the Peking restaurant, and an antipoverty worker was taken to dinner at Washington's plushiest French establishment.

But the crowning blow came when Mr. Von Hoffman invited Alice Roosevelt Longworth, the grande dame of Washington society, to dine at a Hot Shoppes, a chain of restaurants not unlike Howard Johnson's. The article no sooner came out than Hot Shoppes canceled a \$50,000 advertising contract.

"The Post never even told me about it," Mr. Von Hoffman marvels. "On many papers they may stand by you, but at least they'll let you know what their virtue is costing."